SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW AND GREEK BACKGROUND OF *LOGOS* (John 1:1)

Background concept of the term "word" or "spoken word"

1. Hebrew background (BDB 180, KB 210 II)
    a. the power of the spoken word (Isa. 55:11; Ps. 33:6,9; 107:20; 147:15,18), as in Creation (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24, 26,29) and the Patriarchal blessing (Gen. 27:1ff; 49:1)
    b. Proverbs 8:12-23 personifies "Wisdom" as God's first creation and agent of all creation (cf. Ps. 33:6 and the non-canonical Wisdom of Solomon, 9:9)
    c. God's control of nature (cf. Ps. 147:12-20; 148:8) and angels (cf. Ps. 103:19-20)
    d. the Targums (Aramaic translations and commentaries) substitute the phrase "Word of God" for *logos* because of their discomfort with anthropomorphic terms
2. Greek background (*logos*; see exegetical notes online at John 1:1-5)
    a. Heracleitus – the world was in flux; the impersonal divine and unchanging logos (i.e. law) held it together and guided the changing process
    b. Plato – the impersonal and unchanging *logos* kept the planets on course and determined the seasons
    c. Stoics – the *logos* was the "world reason" or manager, but was semi-personal (possibly from Anaxagoras)
    d. Philo – he personified the concept of *logos* as "High Priest that set the soul of man before God," or "the bridge between man and God," or "the tiller by which the Pilot of the universe steers all things" (*kosmocrater*). He called the *Logos*, God's "first-born son" and God's "Ambassador" or God's "Advocate." He emphasized God's transcendence and the Logos was the link to the physical realm.

For a good brief discussion, see ABD, Vol. 4, pp. 348-362.

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